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ABSTRACT

In 1987, Athabasca University (AU) and Keyano College (KC), in Alberta, initiated a collaborative program to provide one-site degree completion opportunities for students residing over 300 kilometers from the nearest degree-granting institution. The Capstone Project is made up of two academic streams: a third year "cap" of the KC business administration diploma program leading to a Bachelor in Administration degree, and courses to complete a 3-year Bachelor of General Studies for students in KC's University Transfer Program. The Academic Vice-Presidents at each institution are responsible for the overall direction of the project, and a steering committee has met twice yearly since 1987. Since Capstone reflects cooperation between two quite distinct institutions, its implementation was not without challenges, including overcoming incompatible organizational mandates, cultures and structures. In 1993-94, however, 36 AU courses were offered with a total of 313 registrations and there were an additional 322 home-study registrations in AU courses. KC, for its part, had 89 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in the business program and 152 FTE's in the transfer program. Program budgets for both AU and KC for 1990-91 were slightly over $100,000 each. Since 1989, 52 students have graduated through the Capstone Project. (Includes narratives by representatives from AU and KC describing conflicts and solutions in implementing the program.) (KP)

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CAPSTONE: AN EXPERIMENT IN ARTICULATION OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in Canada now faces an unprecedented number of stresses and restraints. One of the most pressing current demands is for increased access to university education in communities which are distant from existing residential universities. In Alberta, access to degree programs in smaller, regional cities has been a long-standing issue, and the Capstone degree initiative is now being viewed as one effective response. Collaborative arrangements between an open learning university and a comprehensive community college have addressed the question of access to university degrees in one regional city. This paper describes the evolution of Alberta's first Capstone degree program by examining the nature and development of the project, providing a point of view from each participating institution, and analyzing major obstacles or challenges to cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the economic restraint of the 1990s, there have been calls for increased collaboration and cooperation between and among post-secondary institutions. The reasons most often cited are to reduce duplication and increase access (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994). Athabasca University (AU) and Keyano College (KC) in Alberta initiated a collaborative program in 1987 which has resulted in one-site degree completion opportunities for students residing over 300 kilometres from the nearest degree-granting institution. This collaboration has also been the testing ground for a model that has been endorsed by the provincial government and extended to other colleges in Alberta.

In this paper we will present an overview of the project, and discuss the project from the point of view of each participating institution. We will then present an analysis of the project as a collaboration between two post-secondary institutions with differing organizational cultures.

OVERVIEW

The Capstone Project is made up of two academic streams: first, a third-year "cap" of the Keyano College Business Administration diploma program leading

to a Bachelor of Administration degree, and, second, courses are offered to enable students in the College's University Transfer Program to complete a three-year Bachelor of General Studies degree or to work towards the four-year Bachelor of Arts degree. The Capstone Project provides a campus-based experience for the students. Many of the students combine on-site and distance methods to complete their programs.

The Project in 1993-94

Keyano College is located in Fort McMurray, a city of 35,000 in northeastern Alberta. Its mandate is one of the most comprehensive in the province and includes programs in five areas: academic upgrading and human development, apprenticeship, career diploma, heavy industrial and university transfer. Each year the College enrolls 1300 FTEs at two campuses in Fort McMurray and in five regional communities. Like other colleges outside Edmonton and Calgary, Keyano has been very concerned about the increased call for degree completion programs in the city and region. The demand for higher levels of education, the increased participation of women in higher education and the workforce, the relative isolation of the city, and reduced opportunities for job and family mobility in the 1980s and 1990s all have heightened the demand for degree completion opportunities for local residents.

Athabasca University is based in the town of Athabasca 328 km southwest of Fort McMurray. Since 1978 the University has served Albertans and other Canadians with a mandate of open admissions, credit coordination and distance delivery of undergraduate university degree programs. In 1993, two graduate programs were added.

As a part of a large-scale restructuring of post-secondary education in Alberta, the University announced in February 1994 a new mandate that emphasizes teaching, applied degrees and collaboration with all Alberta colleges for degree completion. The Capstone Project with KC broke the ground for the new role of AU as the principal degree completion partner for Alberta community colleges. What AU has learned from the Capstone Project does and will influence how the University works with other colleges to provide degree completion opportunities for students in their home communities.

In the 1993-94 academic year, the seventh year of the project, 36 AU courses were offered in Fort McMurray as a part of the Capstone Project with a total of 313 registrations. There were a further 322 home study registrations in a variety of AU courses in Fort McMurray in 1993-94. Keyano College had 89 FTE students registered in the Business Administration Diploma Program and 152 FTEs in the University Transfer Program in 1993-94.

Sixteen Capstone students graduated in spring 1994, bringing the total to 52 graduates since 1989. Of these graduates, 33 have been awarded a Bachelor

of Administration degree, 13 have been awarded a Bachelor of General Studies, and six have been awarded a Bachelor of Arts. These numbers cannot be precisely accurate because the part-time programs and credit-coordination efforts of many adult students in the program make it difficult to group individual students into a particular category. There have been, for example, Capstone students who have left the community but who have continued to degree completion through AU home study courses. There were at least three graduates in 1994 who completed their degrees after moving from Fort McMurray.

Administration

The Vice-Presidents (Academic) of the College and the University are responsible for the overall direction of the project. For general administration, authority is delegated to the Dean of Academic and Career Programs and two departmental chairpersons at the College and the Director of Access and Community Programs at the University. AU employs a part-time Capstone Coordinator and a full-time professor in Fort McMurray specifically for the project.

The relationship between the College and the University has evolved using a Steering Committee that has met twice yearly since 1987. The members of the committee are the Vice-Presidents (Academic), the managers directly responsible for the operations of the project including deans, the Registrars, and the Capstone Coordinator. This Committee has reporting to it an Operations Committee which

meets as required to deal with regular operations. Its tasks include bringing forward policy issues, scheduling courses, preparing brochure materials and coordinating promotion of the project in Fort McMurray. An inter-institutional agreement has also evolved that describes these committees and other general operating and policy. Most recently, the Steering Committee's tasks included a community degree completion needs assessment, further refinement of a "seamless transition" for students moving from the College to the University, revision of an indefinite inter-institutional agreement, and coordination of changing program requirements. The Operations Committee has developed a yearly schedule for regular program administration activities and a marketing plan for student recruitment. As second- and third-generation staff assume key positions, there was also a need to consolidate policies and information about the project that were embedded in seven years of minutes of meetings and memos.

In 1993, the inter-institutional agreement was created with an indefinite, rather than annual, time frame, and included a professional agreement for the first time. The latter agreement describes the relationship between instructors at the College and the academic community of the University. The major thrust of the professional agreement is to specify levels of academic and instructional autonomy for college instructors based on their educational qualifications and instructional experience. Also in 1993, the recommendations of a program evaluation done in 1991 had been reviewed, accepted and completed.

INSTITUTIONAL VOICES

The second section of the paper will survey the implementation process and challenges associated with the Capstone Project. Given the unique inter-institutional collaboration which underlies Capstone, one person from AU and KC presents an institutional voice or perspective with the goal of capturing an organizational perspective. These voices provide much of the data for the analytical perspective in the last section.

The Athabasca University Voice

As a thirteen-year veteran of AU, I have been present and involved to varying degrees in the Capstone Project since its inception in 1987. The following presentation of my impressions of the project and its implications for AU are my own views and do not necessarily present an official University view.

At the time of the start of the Capstone Project, I was a Coordinator of Tutorial Services primarily concerned with teleconference programming and the hiring, orientation and workload management of telephone tutors. I worked in the Department of Tutorial Services and Special Projects, a department overseen by a Director and reporting to the Vice-President, Academic. The Director of Tutorial Services and Special Projects was responsible for the administration of the Capstone Project. In Fort McMurray, there was a position which reported jointly

to the Director of Tutorial Services and to the Director of Student Services. The delivery of courses was administered by Tutorial Services and Special Projects, and the operation of Regional Offices was administered by Student Services.

I was Acting Director of Tutorial Services in 1989-90, then appointed to the position of Director of Tutorial and Outreach Services in 1991. Throughout this time the Capstone Project was an important part of the seminar delivery programming. Capstone courses were coordinated and administered in the same way as other seminar delivered courses: qualified candidates located in Fort McMurray were interviewed by the academic in charge of the course and the local Capstone Coordinator in order find the best qualified candidate to act as seminar tutor. KC instructors were treated as any other candidate, although they were given preference when AU courses were delivered as part of the business diploma. Occasionally a seminar tutor travelled from Edmonton.

AU has used a systematic approach for developing home study course materials and a standardized method of providing support for students using telephone tutors. Course materials are developed carefully by a team of professionals that typically includes the subject matter expert, an instructional designer, an editor and a visual designer. This team approach has resulted in home study course packages that are primarily self-instructional. Telephone tutors were introduced to provide a humanizing factor, and to coach, explain, and engage in dialogue with the student.

When it became clear that there were groups of students who would like to take AU courses as a classroom experience, the course coordinators (precursors to professors) suggested that because the home study packages were used as the basis of the course, the professional in the classroom should not be a lecturer, but a tutor who would act as a seminar leader. Students would read and study the materials independently, then gather in the classroom to discuss what they learned under the leadership of a tutor. This model persists although many "seminar tutors" in practice act as instructors and lecturers. There seem to be several reasons for the use of a traditional classroom model: adult students expect a lecture-based classroom experience; the tutors are most familiar with traditional classroom methods; and, in some cases, the home study materials need to be adapted to the particular group or group situation; and the most comfortable and expedient method is a lecture based presentation.

At the time that the Capstone Project was being initiated, AU was providing seminar delivery of home study courses at several sites in Alberta including reserves and the University's regional offices in Edmonton, Calgary and Fort McMurray. Junior university "starter" courses were offered and these were taught by seminar tutors who often were also AU telephone tutors. Classroom delivery of courses was about five per cent of registrations, and, for the staff of the University, considered an "extra" to the main task of providing home study courses.

When the Office of the Vice-President (Academic) at AU agreed to a pilot project with KC, it was seen as an extension of current "seminar delivery" service in Fort McMurray. There was one major difference: a commitment to students that the courses would be planned for on-site degree completion, rather than as a selection of junior courses intended only to start the degree-seeking process. A complete program in Fort McMurray would also necessitate the offering of senior courses that had not been previously presented in the classroom, and would result in some small class sizes. The complete degree plan was also a positive step for existing part-time AU students in Fort McMurray who had asked for a planned approach to the offering of seminar classes in order to maximize the number of courses available in this mode. At all times students had the option of taking any AU course by home study.

Early in the project's life, problem-solving was focused on the tremendous details of registry policies and regulations: registration and enrollment status of students in both institutions, grading scale differences, examination procedures, transcript evaluation, use of forms, academic misconduct procedures and others. There was one immediately agreed upon principle: that the different processes would be transparent to the student. The worst fear was that a student would be disadvantaged somehow by the joint process.

The individuals involved in the project in the first few years made a difference to its success. At meetings there was an initial reluctance to change

administrative details of each institution's operations, but the goal of service to students and an understanding of what was needed to maintain institutional integrity kept the discussions on track. If there had been a resistance to the project by any individual, especially the Registrars, students could have been seriously compromised.

AU courses "embedded" in the College two-year business diploma were first offered in 1987. This became a central and particularly problematic part of the Capstone Project and was necessitated by the University's requirement that 50 per cent of the credits for the three-year administrative studies degree be completed at AU. As a result, the College had to substitute five university courses for college courses in the diploma program. By 1990, it was becoming evident that KC instructors did not feel that the model of the "seminar tutor" was appropriate for their work with AU courses. Some of the individuals acting as tutors were also teaching courses transferable to the University of Alberta and had autonomy in setting assignments and exams, marking final exams and awarding final grades. College faculty acting as AU tutors marked preset assignments, frequently did not mark the final examinations and were expected to closely follow the home study course package unless there was prior approval from the supervising academic.

I had heard comments at meetings about the KC instructors' concerns and understood there was an internal document prepared by and circulating among the college instructors. There seemed to be no official acknowledgment until 1990

when AU staff travelled to Fort McMurray to meet with KC instructors. Part of the meeting was a presentation by the Dean of Arts and Sciences and several AU professors to explain the learning systems model underlying the University's view of the role of the classroom worker. The presentation, as I recall, was received as interesting but irrelevant by the KC instructors. I attended the presentation and consider it to be the low point of relations between the College and University. Simply put, there needed to be more trust and respect between the academic staff of the institutions.

An example of a routine administrative issue not yet resolved is the use of space. AU courses delivered as part of the diploma program have been delivered on the KC campus. A few blocks away, AU has a Learning Centre where third-year business and arts courses are offered. The argument has been made that the Capstone Program should be a campus-based program, and that all courses should be offered on the KC campus: students should have the "campus experience." Staff of the AU Learning Centre feel that the adults in the program are more comfortable in the open office environment of the Learning Centre rather than the "lockers in the hallway" environment of the College. A survey of the students was inconclusive. As of early 1994 discussions were continuing, but it was agreed that service to students (the student survey) should take precedent over issues of territoriality.

A few obvious (now they are obvious) lessons have come from the process of developing the Capstone arrangements with KC. First, although the institutions have two different mandates and two different delivery emphases, we are both post-secondary institutions with a goal of service to students. That vision has won out over many other academic, political and organizational viewpoints to provide the bedrock for the project.

Our experience in addressing the concerns of the KC instructors has given us a second lesson that, upon reflection, looks embarrassingly obvious: It is important to bring together the people directly involved in the collaboration early in the process, especially when two very different institutional cultures are involved. The habits of AU are ones developed for dealing with communications systematically at a distance. It was not an immediate impulse to have faculty from both institutions meet face to face in other than individual course meetings. We did not realize how different AU is in its institutional environment.

A third lesson is one of process: iterative development of a project infrastructure is lumpy but ultimately works. The University and the College entered this relationship without a blueprint, only a picture of the desired results. Once there was institutional will to achieve a joint program, the details emerged, or, perhaps more accurately, were dragged, chopped and hammered into place.

Institutional commitment, a simple common vision, and the right individuals "on the ground" appear to be the key factors in the project's success. AU has

taken both the lessons learned and the tangible results such as the professional agreement, and developed collaborative relationships with three other colleges in Alberta and is in discussion with several others as of spring 1994. The Capstone Project has pointed the way for AU to better serve students in their own communities while illustrating the strengths of collaborative projects.

The Keyano College Voice

The voice I present as a KC participant encompasses a number of perspectives resulting from changing roles. While I had been a part of the early AU-KC discussions about greater institutional cooperation and the concept of degree completion in Fort McMurray, my involvement became significant in 1987 when I returned from a sabbatical leave to find that Capstone was being implemented in the Business Administration Diploma Program that fall. As Chairperson of the University Transfer Department at that time I observed the implementation challenges encountered by the Business Department, and I worked over the next two years to develop the Capstone model for the arts and general studies degrees. After becoming Vice-President, Instruction in 1989 my involvement became less operational, but I still was an active participant in the inter-institutional Steering Committee. The vice-president's role led me to be a part of the provincial discussions which began in 1992 about taking the Capstone model to other colleges in relation to career diploma and transfer programs. The

story I will tell will be a highly personal one, but, at the same time, I believe it is largely typical of the story which other actors at KC would present.

I think three themes capture the portrait I want to present: disorganization and conflict; incompatible organizational mandates, cultures and structures; and the emergence of trust, shared understandings and new structures. I will begin with the story of the disorganization and conflict; these forces were understandably at their height during the first two years of the program. As indicated earlier, AU's requirements forced a modification of the overall curriculum for the business program in order to align diploma requirements with degree requirements. In short, the academic requirements of one institution were dictating the academic requirements of another. Given, first, the need to move quickly and, second, the organizational change strategy adopted by several personnel at KC, these modifications were made without approval through the accepted academic review process including Academic Council and the Board of Governors. Many faculty and some administrators saw this as usurping the legitimate authority of those two bodies. In addition, the curriculum changes were perceived as moving the diploma program away from its legitimate mandate to prepare people for career entry to a more general orientation in a degree program which was seen as lacking a clear occupational focus.

Many college personnel questioned the legitimacy of affiliating with AU. No one, they argued, had demonstrated, in any systematic way, the need for the

degree in Fort McMurray. Because the University was not well known and because home study courses were seen as "academically suspect" there was greater criticism of the venture than if the College had affiliated with a traditional institution.

Much of the conflict and disorganization resulted from the attempt to cobble together two different course delivery models without creating a new model appropriate to this venture. Briefly stated, KC faculty had to take courses designed for independent study and make them into classroom courses. Instructors taught the courses as a part of their regular assignment but were responsible to AU because they were teaching that institution's courses. Consistent with the University's differentiated academic staff model, KC faculty were assigned the role of tutors which meant they had less academic and professional autonomy in this role than in their college role. Tests, assignments and exams were set by AU faculty and, at the outset, graded by university professors or other tutors. Instructors found the task difficult and reacted to the loss of academic autonomy. Their peers at KC were alarmed. Numerous practical problems resulted. The grading process was cumbersome and students did not receive their results as quickly as in college courses. Sometimes exams did not arrive on time. The task of obtaining and distributing course materials to KC students became a logistical nightmare. The grading systems were incompatible.

Conflict existed at the inter-organizational level as well. From my vantage point at least, academic administrators and faculty at the University saw the College forcing an initiative which did not have the latter's total commitment. University personnel saw college personnel as demanding and disorganized. College personnel saw university personnel as rigid and unresponsive.

When I stand back and consider the list of problems identified above and in the documents, I believe that the underlying organizational problem relates to the second theme: incompatibility of culture, mandate and organizational process. While KC is a community college rather than a university, many of its organizational features resemble a traditional university rather than a distance education institution. The academic year is made up of two semesters and a spring term. AU is a year-round institution and, particularly in 1987, the marriage with a traditional semester system was problematic. Individual faculty members at the University coordinate one or more courses and report directly to deans. No one below the dean's level could speak for one discipline or department. The College had the academic structure of faculty, chairpersons, deans and a vice-president, instruction. In 1987 there were no full-time students at the University and, as a result, the College's desire to create a campus-based, full-time program raised problems related to tuition fees, student status and instructional delivery.

The mandates of the two institutions are very different. KC is a comprehensive community college with a diverse range of program offerings. The

academic goals of the two-year Business Administration Diploma reflect an emphasis on direct employment entry. The University's administrative studies program reflects the mix of academic and professional goals characteristic of university degrees in business and management.

While the mandates of the institutions did clash, these differences were minor compared to the clash of mandates of an open, distance education university with a campus-based college oriented to full-time study. As an open university, AU did not have academic admissions requirements. As a distance education institution, AU's students were enrolled part time in one or two courses, and used highly developed course packages designed for individual study assisted by telephone tutors. While the University was offering some classroom courses in other locations, all of its procedures and systems were oriented to the students profiled above. From the College's vantage point, the University was somewhat ambivalent about developing a campus-based program such as the Capstone Project. College personnel wanted to create a full-time degree program made up of the two years of either the Business or University Transfer Program followed by a third and final year of University courses offered on the college campus in a very traditional delivery format. KC personnel felt the University was unwilling to adapt its systems to achieve this goal while, I am sure, university personnel saw the College clinging to outmoded instructional models. College personnel were adamant about the classroom experience as a key ingredient of academic integrity

and university personnel believed academic quality could be achieved with different delivery methods. KC personnel believed that the Capstone Project could serve as a model for other colleges which were clamouring for degree-granting status or degree-completion programs. They felt the University was not operationalizing an opportunity to broaden its distance education mandate.

While my story so far has been more about challenges than successes, I can report that the emergence of trust, shared understandings and new organizational models, my third theme, has resulted in an effective model of college and university articulation. It is hard to date a turning point, but I would suggest that 1989 was a watershed year.

I will paint a picture of the collaborative relationship which exists in 1994 and then point out what I think led to the transformation. Strong lateral relationships have developed between personnel at the two institutions. For example, the Registrars work together effectively and solve problems independently rather than referring them upward in their respective organizations. The Operations Committee which is made up of two KC chairpersons and one dean, the Registrars of both institutions, and the Capstone Coordinator from the University's Fort McMurray office meets frequently and successfully selects and schedules courses and markets the program. As a result, the Steering Committee has a clearer role in long-range planning and policy issues. By 1994 the University has largely resolved the academic autonomy issues for instructors, although

change was beginning to occur in 1989. Faculty from the same discipline at both institutions have developed strong professional and personal ties. KC faculty now feel recognized as academic colleagues rather than tutors. In 1993, the University's Faculty of Administrative Studies modified the residency requirements from one half to one third which eliminates the need for university courses to be part of the business diploma. During the 1993-94 academic year, faculty from both institutions reached agreement on new business diploma and administrative studies degree requirements which they view as effectively maintaining the integrity of both programs.

Numerous factors led to the changes. Personnel changes at both institutions brought forward some new people who were committed to Capstone and improved personal and inter-organizational relationships. KC finally took the program through the academic approval process which dampened some of the legitimate criticism. KC's Chairperson of the University Transfer Program assumed a leadership role in establishing and maintaining the Operations Committee. A program review (Andrews, Duke, Kapoor & Wong, 1991) was completed by an external team and KC personnel felt their concerns were heard and recognized in the recommendations. This external report gave a momentum for change which held both institutions accountable. The Department of Advanced Education granted continuing program approval and funding in 1991 and this stability reinforced the commitment of key personnel at both institutions. The College and

the University received recognition from politicians and senior public servants for its role in establishing this innovative program.

THE CHALLENGES OF COLLABORATION

The task in this final section is to consolidate perspectives on Capstone into what might be referred to as an organizing framework for understanding the dynamics of collaboration and the change which accompanies such collaboration. A number of recurring themes or dimensions will be analyzed with the goal of shedding light on challenges to implementation and possibilities for future development.

Culture, Values, and Institutional Autonomy

As portrayed in the institutional voices section, Capstone reflects cooperation between two quite distinct institutions. Experiments in cooperation between such diverse institutions will surely elicit numerous challenges to smooth and successful implementation. One such general challenge relates to the autonomy which participating institutions will naturally wish to exercise. In its essence, the problem can be expressed as, "Who should take responsibility for what?" The nature of this issue extends from the simple and informal sharing of various sorts of information to problems of duplication of student services;

overlapping administrative functions; and academic problems relating to course equivalency, instructor qualifications, fees, and criteria and standards for grading.

It could also be argued, however, that the conflict of institutional autonomy with the need for collaboration reflects a more basic problem of difference in institutional cultures and values. In effect, fundamental educational principles or values can be observed to interact and conflict in any inter-institutional initiative. Capstone is no exception. Simply, the basic purpose of Capstone is to enhance access to university degree education. This mandate coincides with the mandates of each participating institution in that both KC and AU set access as a basic priority. Diversity of programming at each institution, and AU's range of program delivery and open learning policy strongly attest to commitments by both institutions to accessibility. The Capstone agreement clearly reflects this commitment even further. In addition, however, AU carries responsibility for granting degree credentials and thus the onus is placed on this institution to establish and maintain standards consistent with the offering of university degrees. This is manifested by AU's monitoring of the first- and second-year courses in KC's business program and particularly in control over the third and final year of the administrative studies degree. In order to establish quality in educational standards, AU has maintained control of program and course parameters. This was paralleled by adjustments to the business program at KC in order to more closely synchronize it with the AU degree program.

This level of cooperation in program design is not without conflict. In 1991, a Capstone evaluation report revealed tensions among instructors at KC whose programs were modified, and among those faculty recruited to act as tutors in the delivery of AU courses (Andrews et al. 1991). Faculty expressed concern over infringement of instructional freedom to alter course approaches, use personal style, or otherwise augment course content with additional and more appropriate resources. This infringement on academic freedom in turn appeared to lead to periods of eroded collegiality within and between institutions. Further, a document compiled by university transfer faculty at KC and released in spring of 1990, indicated that a rift had developed between the Capstone Program and university transfer staff. The document expressed a number of concerns over the impact of the Capstone Project on the college as a whole and college programs, the extent of control exercised by AU, and the credibility and quality of the Capstone degree and thus the image of KC.

Clearly, the clash between two distinct institutional mandates reflects a more fundamental interplay between various competing interests and the educational values which inevitably drive any organizational purpose.

Administrative Structures and Process

Konrad and Small (1989) postulate three distinct levels of collaboration among institutions. The first--information sharing--characterizes those relations

where individuals, committees, departments, or divisions, voluntarily exchange various information. Collaboration in this case is voluntary and informal. Institutions exchange information on students, programs, and operational details through various means based on trust and informal lines of communication. Second, strategic collaboration refers to formal arrangements to collaborate in a limited way. Program delivery in specified areas, brokerage arrangements, or lease arrangements represent strategic cooperation.

The third and highest level of cooperation, or consortia, represents formal arrangements on the part of two or more institutions wherein a new mechanism is established to undertake programs of mutual interest (Konrad & Small, 1989, p. 200). A formal agreement is usually necessary, and decision-making authority usually resides with a representative board.

Based on these three levels of analysis, it is quite clear that the Capstone Project represents collaboration at the strategic level, and perhaps in some ways, at the consortium level. Capstone represents a joint venture between two quite heterogeneous institutions for the specific purpose of offering university degree programming. Policy making authority ultimately resides with a representative Steering Committee. The Capstone initiative has necessitated the creation of new management mechanisms and distinct policy, programs, and courses throughout the history of its development.

Konrad and Small (1989) also note that more centralized or unified administrative structures will likely become necessary to deal with issues of responsibility and emerging problems and opportunities. The dilemma of appropriate collaborative structure to accommodate rapid development and provide effective student service is one of the most dominant challenges faced by those involved in the capstone effort. Examination of minutes of the Steering and Operations Committees and accompanying correspondence between officers of each institution, reveals recurring concerns related to admissions, registration, fees, advance credit, course planning and scheduling, and student evaluation and grading.

At the outset, business students taking AU courses as a part of the diploma program were required to register and pay application fees at both institutions. It was not until late 1991, however, after considerable discussion between institutions and recommendations from the Evaluation Report (Andrews, et al, 1991) that a single registration form and fee was implemented. Problems were also encountered in the evaluation of transcripts and in granting students advanced credit, although according to the Evaluation Report, very small numbers applied for and received such credit. Again, problems were encountered in marking and the dissemination of final grades to students and all instructors involved. Lengthy turnaround times appeared to be the main problem, and this, in

turn, stemmed from the use of two distinct systems and separate criteria for many of these services.

Additional problems seemed to occur in communicating program changes and in planning and scheduling courses so that all needs, including those of students, were addressed. As evidenced from minutes of meetings and inter-institutional correspondence, concerns were expressed by KC over changes made by AU in degree program courses and content, and how such changes would impact instruction in the Capstone Program.

Continued efforts by members of both institutions and members of the Steering Committee have done much to resolve and streamline these recurring administrative issues. It is quite apparent that a fine balance exists between the autonomy and control exercised by each institution, and the cooperation required to create or modify structure and process in order to provide the most effective student learning experience possible.

Modes of Delivery

Analysis of the institutional voices section suggests that additional challenges occurred at the instructional level of the Capstone project. Instructional arrangements created two obstacles. First, instructors at KC expressed concern over the adaptability of home study packages in the classroom setting. The evaluation report (Andrews et al. 1991) revealed that many KC instructors

considered the tutorial role as demeaning and academically stifling, while the home study packages allowed little room for personal style, innovation, or the addition or modification of relevant materials (p. 15). Second, AU assumed sole responsibility for final grading. Slow turnaround times in reporting of final grades created delays in the communication and posting of marks. Capstone students further expressed concern over the two forms of evaluation being used for the program and the varying sets of expectations that inevitably accompany such arrangements (p. 15).

These issues are being addressed through joint workshops and other forms of enhanced communication between instructional staff and administrators at both institutions. More important, however, in addressing such issues, is the development of formal agreements between the institutions and the formalization of policy and leadership mechanisms.

Policy and Leadership Mechanisms

Policy guidance, direction, and leadership in the conception, development, and implementation of the Capstone Project was provided primarily through the work of the Steering Committee and sub-committees evolving from this body. At present, the Operations Committee, under the auspices of the Steering Committee, attends to most ongoing managerial responsibilities. The Steering Committee assumes responsibility for strategic issues, guides the functioning of the Operations Committee, and oversees the ongoing development of the Capstone

initiative. Final responsibility resides in the offices of the vice-presidents of both institutions. The formalization of these committees, in keeping with recommendations of the evaluation report (Andrews et al. 1991), represent a constructive step in resolving many structural and process obstacles. For example, the development of the professional agreement marks one major step forward in academic relations between KC and AU, and indeed, provides a working model of professional relations for other institutions. This agreement clearly defines parameters for accreditation of instructors and other academic and collegial relations between instructional staff in the delivery of university degree programs and courses. Thus, to a significant extent, the agreement directly addresses recurring problems in the history of Capstone development related to responsibilities of instructors, grading processes, and ultimately, academic freedom and collegiality.

Cost

An important consideration in the development and implementation of such an initiative is, of course, operating and capital expenditures. Operating costs for Capstone include primarily instructor, support, and coordinator salaries; staff training and development; travel; promotion; program evaluation; administrative costs and supplies;, and costs of alternative delivery. Capital costs for the program include mainly enhancement of library resources and equipment.

Results of the Evaluation Report (Andrews et al. 1991) confirm the cost-efficiency of the Capstone Project. Program budgets for both AU and KC for 1990-91 were slightly over $100,000 each. One limitation in these comparisons, however, is differing units of analysis used by each institution in the calculation of educational costs. Thus, analysis in the evaluation report compared Capstone costs with the costs of instruction in regular programs at each institution. Comparison of AU's regular enrollment cost with the cost of Capstone per unit of analysis shows a difference of less than three per cent. Comparison of cost per full-time equivalent student unit at KC between university transfer education and Capstone education shows substantially less cost in the education of Capstone full time equivalent students.

Degree Credibility

Some evidence suggests that the success of such innovative programs can be affected by perceptions of the credibility of degrees obtained in comparison to more conventional degree attainment. Konrad and Small (1989) suggest that the absence of the more traditional "trappings" of university education such as residency requirements and some form of lecture or laboratory contact hours for determining credit may tend to diminish the credibility of collaborative programs in the minds of both faculty and community members (p. 198). In addition, a study by Montgomery (1990) of degree granting in community colleges points to

concern by various stakeholders in the Alberta higher education community over the perceived credibility of distance education degrees (p.175). This image is exacerbated by varying levels of entrance requirements or open entrance policies for different programs at both KC and AU. For example, AU maintains an open policy on admissions, in keeping with its philosophy of alternative delivery and open learning (Paul, 1986, p. 138). Further, length of degree programs--a three-year Capstone degree compared with more conventional four-year degrees--can affect credibility. These conditions may indeed impact on public perception of Capstone degrees. An additional influence, however, may simply be related to public awareness and understanding.

Public Awareness and Marketing

Access to innovative programs such as Capstone must be preceded by public awareness if such programs are to provide maximum benefit to the community. In fact, awareness of these programs and an understanding of their nature and purpose may be linked to perceptions of credibility. This may account for the fact that although those outside direct involvement with Capstone expressed concern over credibility, such concern was absent among those more closely tied to Capstone activities. Concern over credibility of the degree was not an issue among respondent groups (faculty, students, administrators, and community members) surveyed in the evaluation report.

Examination of minutes of Steering Committee meetings shows advertising and public awareness as a recurring issue. Minutes of Steering Committee meetings as recent as the spring of 1991 demonstrate recognition of the need for a sustained marketing agenda for the Capstone Project. This is corroborated by findings in the evaluation report (Andrews et al. 1991). Results of surveys indicated that a full 82 per cent of students from high schools in the community were unaware of the program (p. 11). Indeed, in cases where institutions join in initiating innovative programs, marketing considerations may prove valuable in addressing issues of awareness, access, and even credibility.

CONCLUSION

It is predictable that the efficient and effective implementation of the Capstone model for degree completion in a college setting would spark interest in additional joint ventures. This indeed has been the case in Alberta. The successes of the program now serve as a model for discussions which have begun between AU, public colleges, and technical institutes on greater system-wide collaboration in enhancing access to degrees. A general professional agreement governing academic relations between AU and colleges and technical institutes in future joint ventures was approved by AU in 1993. The Capstone initiative clearly laid the groundwork for this achievement in system-wide collaboration.

In all, evidence suggests that Capstone is a resounding success. The Capstone Project was generally regarded as effective by faculty, administrators, students, and community groups (Andrews et al. 1991, p. 20). It is clear, however, that the program was rushed to implementation without a needs assessment, academic approval, effective program design, and long-range planning. It is also clear that many of the problems suggested above can be attributed to the lack of a formalized implementation process. In retrospect, many stakeholders now feel that a formal adherence to such processes would have meant that the program would never have been instituted. The program design and procedural problems which would have been identified in a traditional implementation process would have overwhelmed the aggregate abilities of faculty and administrators, while those opposed to the model and university/college affiliation would have exerted their influence more directly.

As students of organizational change, we are left with a complex dilemma related to the planning and management of change in higher education institutions. Seven years after a somewhat rocky implementation and without the benefit of many formalized implementation procedures, AU and KC have a program which operates successfully and meets an important educational need. Just as significantly, the program has responded to many of the important issues in higher education in Alberta in the 1990s including degree completion access in regional centres, articulation of career diploma and degree programs, college-university

collaboration, and expanded distance education. The *Adult Learning Access Through Innovation: Draft White Paper, An Agenda for Change* issued by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in March 1994 indicates significant and far-reaching changes in mandate for Alberta's post-secondary institutions, including emphasis on greater collaboration between universities and colleges. Particular reference is made to Athabasca University and Capstone-type initiatives:

> [The institution] . . . will be expected to play a key role in providing opportunities for diploma students to complete regular and applied degree programs. Through distance education and partnerships between Athabasca University and other institutions, students should be able to complete diplomas and degrees while residing anywhere in the province.

Forced change in 1987 resulted in a collaborative educational initiative which broke new ground and effectively addressed many of the goals for higher education which are now gaining greater currency.

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